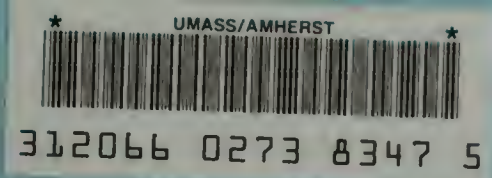


MASS. G5.2:P92



A Prevention Plan

FY98 Domestic Violence Initiative

- Legal Assistance for Victims

- Civil Advocates for Victims

- Batterer Intervention Programs

- Counseling and Shelter Services

- Visitation Centers

- Violence Prevention Specialists

- School Based Programs

Prepared by the

**Governor's Commission
on Domestic Violence**

For further information contact:
Marie Kenny, Executive Director
(617) 727-2065, ext. 331

FY 98 - HOUSE 1

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

FY 98 Account Number	INITIATIVES	FY97 House 1	FY97 Actual Appropriation	FY98 Proposed Expansion	FY98 House 1
0320-0000	Legal Assistance for Victims	\$1,132,000	1,132,000	350,805	1,482,805
0330-2410	Training for Court Personnel		100,000	-100,000	
0340-xxxx	District Attorney Prosecution	\$3,422,410	3,530,712		3,530,712
0411-1000	Domestic Violence Commission (staff)			50,000	50,000
0840-0101	Civil Advocates for Victims	\$998,120	115,000	699,550	814,550
4513-1000	N. Quabbin		79,200		79,200
4513-1001	Certified Batterer Intervention Programs	\$300,000		450,000	450,000
4800-1400	DSS: Shelter & Counseling Services	\$12,819,080	9,815,257	2,400,000	12,215,257
4800-1400	DSS: Visitation Centers	\$300,000	50,000	400,000	450,000
4800-1500	DSS: Violence Prevention Specialists	\$555,700	450,000	136,500	586,500
7032-0501	School Based Programs (teen dating violence)	\$300,000	300,000	572,500	872,500
8910-0000	County Corrections: Bristol County		20,000	-20,000	
	TOTAL	\$19,902,310	\$15,592,169	4,939,355	20,531,524

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**Summary of Expansion Requests for
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS
HOUSE 1 - FY 1998**

0321-1600

Battered Women's Legal Assistance Program - Expansion of \$350,805 would enable Legal Services to provide statewide coverage. Currently, the program for battered women exists in only two thirds of the state.

0840-0101

Civil Advocates for Victims - \$699,550 would enable SAFEPLAN to expand by:

- a. Increasing the part-time civil court advocate positions to full time, in the Hampshire - Franklin Counties' pilot program.
- b. Providing for fifteen SAFEPLAN advocates to cover Probate Courts throughout the state.
- c. Allowing the hiring of three SAFEPLAN Regional Coordinators to supervise the civil court advocates.

4513-1001

Certified Batterer Intervention Programs - \$450,000 would allow funding to be distributed by an R.F.P. process, to provide these programs with the necessary financial support to remain open. It will also permit Dept. of Public Health to hire an Administrator to assist in monitoring certified programs, and to conduct an accurate needs assessment.

4800-1400

Visitation Centers - \$400,000 in expansion would enable D.S.S. to provide for a visitation center in each D.S.S. region. Currently, three centers (Brockton, Roxbury and Springfield) are funded federally, and these centers are nearing the end of the grant period. One center (Framingham) is funded by the state.

4800-1400

Counseling and Shelter Services - \$2.4 million in expansion for two purposes:

- a. Through an R.F.P. process, programs would be able to enhance basic services offered, or to make physical plant improvements, depending on the program's individual needs.
- b. An average of 1.5 F.T.E. positions per program, again through an R.F.P. process, could be hired to do community case work. This will enable programs to work with women who are screened out of shelter, as a result of mental health issues or substance abuse, as well as with women who choose not to live in shelter. These case workers will be invaluable, especially as Dept. of Transitional Assistance begins to screen and identify battered women and refer them to shelters for on-going support services.

4800-1500

Violence Prevention Specialists - \$136,500 would enable D.S.S. to convert the Domestic Violence Specialists from consultants to full time employees. This would greatly improve the agency's ability to recruit and maintain qualified personnel for this extremely important unit.

7032-0501

School Based Programs (Teen Dating Violence) - \$572,500 in expansion would allow:

- a. Replication of the program from its current thirty-six sites to a total of nearly eighty sites.
- b. Dept. of Education to convert the part time administrator's position to full time.
- c. Dept. of Education to hire an administrator whose responsibility would be to implement the recommendations of the Children's Report, including policy development for schools to better address the needs of children of domestic violence.

JANE DOE SCENARIO

Jane Doe, the mother of 2 young children, lives with the children and their father who abuses both her and her children.

One of Jane's children gets in trouble at school and is sent to the school psychologist. The child reveals that his parents "fight a lot" but says nothing about his own abuse. The psychologist, untrained in domestic violence, calls the child's house to speak with the parents and speaks to the father (See line item # 7032-0501, page 4).

That afternoon when Jane and her children arrive home the father flies into a rage; neighbors summon the police.

Police arrive and find signs of abuse to Jane and one child. They:

- Give Jane written notice of her rights under 209A along with the hot-line number for the battered women's service agency in her area (See line item # 4800-1400, page 5);
- Inform Jane of her options under the abuse prevention statute including the right to seek a protective order (209A);
- File a 51A with DSS on the abused child.

Jane goes to Probate and Family Court to seek a restraining order, is assisted with paper work, accompanied before the judge and given referrals to community agencies by a SAFEPLAN advocate (See line item # 0840-0101, page 6). Jane is issued a temporary restraining order good for 10 days.

DSS begins an investigation into the child abuse case (See line item # 4800-1500, page 7).

Police "serve" the abuser with the restraining order.

While at court to extend the restraining order, the abuser, with his attorney, initiates paperwork to begin divorce proceedings and to gain custody of the children. The SAFEPLAN Advocate refers Jane to the Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project (See line item #0321-1600, page 8) for legal assistance with the divorce and custody issues.

After leaving court, the abuser goes to Jane's house to "discuss" the kids — a violation of the restraining order. Jane calls the police who arrive and arrest the abuser. At District Court the abuser is prosecuted by a domestic violence prosecutor and Jane is assisted by a District Attorney Victim Witness Advocate (See District Attorney line items #'s 0340-XXXX). Upon conviction of the restraining order violation, the batterer is given probation with the condition that he attend a Certified Batterer's Intervention program (See line item # 4513-1001, page 9).

At the Probate and Family Court divorce and custody hearing, the abuser receives a temporary order for supervised visitation at a visitation center (See line item # 4800-1400, page 10).

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of various factors on the growth of a certain plant species. The study was conducted over a period of six months, from January to June 2023.

The study was carried out in a controlled environment, specifically in a glasshouse. The plants were grown in pots, and the experimental design was a randomized complete block design. The factors being studied were light intensity, temperature, and water availability.

The results of the study show that light intensity had a significant effect on the growth of the plant. Higher light intensity resulted in faster growth and higher biomass.

Temperature also had a significant effect on growth. The optimal temperature for growth was found to be 25°C. Growth was slower at lower and higher temperatures.

Water availability was also a factor. Plants that received more water grew faster and had higher biomass. However, there was a point where too much water became detrimental to growth.

The study concludes that light intensity, temperature, and water availability are all important factors that affect the growth of the plant. Further research is needed to determine the optimal levels for each factor.

The study was funded by the National Science Foundation. The authors would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. The data generated during the study are available in the public domain.

The authors would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the study: Dr. John Doe, Dr. Jane Smith, and Dr. Michael Brown. The authors also thank the staff of the glasshouse for their help in maintaining the plants.

The authors declare that they have no other financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

FY'98 FACT SHEET

SCHOOL-BASED TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION GRANTS Department of Education - Line Item 7032-0501

	FY '96	FY '97	FY '98 Request
Teen Dating Violence Grants	\$250,000	\$300,000	\$872,500

The Subcommittee on Community Education for the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence asks the legislature to appropriate \$872,500 to expand the School-Based Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Intervention program from the existing 38 pilot sites to a total of 80 sites statewide. To continue to support these sites in developing safe and effective programming and to spread its lessons state and nation-wide, the Subcommittee supports an expanded technical assistance and evaluation component and the inclusion of a specialist on children who witness domestic violence. This new component will be critical in beginning to address the issues that put children at high risk of involvement in teen dating violence and further adult violence and abuse.

In FY '96, the legislature appropriated \$250,000 to the Department of Education to pilot a program addressing the issue of teen dating violence. Taking lessons from the battered women's movement and youth violence prevention, teen dating violence and youth experts recommended a program that would both raise awareness to prevent abuse and provide students with supports to escape existing violence. Thirty-one school districts and vocational schools received grants of approximately \$7,000 to implement a six-pronged program that included 1) developing a team of local experts (police, battered women's shelters, DA's offices, etc.) to oversee the programs; 2) implementing a prevention curriculum; 3) organizing school-based victim support and batterer intervention groups; 4) reviewing school policies and procedures and developing referral systems to the appropriate mental and physical health and legal services students would need; 5) developing peer leadership programs; and 6) offering parents information about the warning signs of teen dating violence and available resources.

In FY '97, \$300,000 was appropriated to support these existing sites to expand to all the middle and high schools in their area. Sites also began to institutionalize their teen batterer intervention programs, the first such in this state and to further support the development of peer education activities, one of the most effective tools in prevention. In FY '97, the program also brought on an additional seven sites to promote better regional distribution. Supports for sites have included general awareness training for school staff, training in implementing prevention curriculum, adult batterer intervention training and working with the adolescent perpetrator, a guide to model policies and procedures, on-site assistance in program development and opportunities for sharing among the sites. On-going evaluation is also being conducted.

In FY '98, the Subcommittee recommends the expansion of the six-pronged program to an additional 40 sites. For second and third year sites, we will recommend further linkages with elementary schools to begin developing system-wide prevention programs and to address issues of children witnessing violence. We will also encourage greater connections with community resources and collaborative bodies to develop community-wide support. A specialist would be placed at the Department of Education to develop seminars and resource guides for school staff to identify and begin to address the needs of children who witness violence in their homes and to help schools think through the policies necessary to keep these children and their abused parent safe in the school setting.

The School-Based Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Intervention Program has been effective in raising awareness and addressing the concern of relationship violence because it is a comprehensive program based on sound principles. It meets youth where violence happens and is reported and provides services where they feel safe. It provides a network of support and makes use of existing community resources. Because the program is unique in the country, it has gained the attention of the Federal Government for evaluation and potential expansion nation-wide. We recommend furthering the success here in Massachusetts with state-wide expansion.

For more information contact: Carole Sousa, Department of Education - (617) 492-0395
Gillian Cohen, EOHHS - (617) 727-7600

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first time that the President has addressed the Congress since the establishment of the office.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 1, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Navy and the ships that are in service.

3. The third part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 1, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Treasury and the funds that are available.

4. The fourth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated January 1, 1801. It contains information about the state of the War and the troops that are in service. It also contains information about the military operations that have taken place since the beginning of the year.

5. The fifth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 1, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Interior and the lands that are available. It also contains information about the Indian tribes that live in the Interior and the relations between them and the Government.

6. The sixth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Marine Corps, dated January 1, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Marine Corps and the ships that are in service. It also contains information about the military operations that have taken place since the beginning of the year.

7. The seventh part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Army, dated January 1, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Army and the troops that are in service. It also contains information about the military operations that have taken place since the beginning of the year.

8. The eighth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Air Force, dated January 1, 1801. It contains information about the state of the Air Force and the aircraft that are in service. It also contains information about the military operations that have taken place since the beginning of the year.

FY '98 FACT SHEET

Counseling and Shelter Services

Line Item 4800-1400

	<u>FY'97 Appropriation</u>	<u>FY '98 Request</u>
Services to Battered Women and Their Children	9.7 million	12.1 million

Governor Weld has requested 12.1 million dollars in his House One budget for domestic violence counseling and shelter services. This funding would increase the ability of domestic violence programs to meet the increased demand for services for battered women and their children.

There are 420 emergency shelter beds in the state of Massachusetts. These beds are reserved for families who are in imminent danger of physical harm by their partners. While 1,451 women and children were served in emergency shelter between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996, programs recorded that over 7,000 families were turned away due to lack of space. In addition, over 80,000 hotline calls were answered, legal advocacy was provided to 16,425 individuals, and over 18,000 women and over 1,500 children received individual or group counseling services. Programs also provided training and education to Massachusetts communities in the areas of dating violence, law enforcement, health care providers, clergy, court personnel, mental health service providers, and community service groups. In total, these trainings reached an audience of over 58,000 people.

A recent survey of the Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups identified the most critical needs for servicing battered women and their children:

- Increased staffing to address waiting lists for counseling and the delivery of comprehensive services;
- A need for shelter renovations to meet the demands of servicing disabled women and to create space for children's programs;
- The need for transportation services for programs located in rural areas where the lack of transportation poses enormous barriers for battered women and their children attempting to access needed services;
- A need for the enhancement of specialized services to cultural and linguistic minorities, same-sex battering victims, substance abusing battered women and their children, elderly battered women and disabled battered women and their children;
- A need for increased volunteer services to fill current program gaps and enhance comprehensive services to battered women and their children;
- A need to increase violence prevention programs to meet the current demand aimed at stopping the cycle of violence for children and teens.

If awarded this funding, the Department of Social Services will issue a competitive bid asking for creative solutions to address these needs. The increase in funding is requested to support and enhance the current network of service providers; to stabilize the infrastructure of current programs; and staff support for community based caseworkers. Through a coordinated and comprehensive community network, we are able to better and more quickly respond to the needs of victims of domestic violence and potentially prevent the need to increase shelter beds.

The demand for services for battered women and their children in Massachusetts has risen dramatically in part due to the increased awareness and commitment to end domestic violence. Nationally, President Clinton's historical signing of the Violence Against Women Act and the signing of the federal welfare bill with a directive urging states to develop plans to respond to victims of domestic violence, will require an increased response by a currently overburdened system. Increased funding is imperative to meet the rising needs and adequately respond to the calls for help from all victims of domestic violence.

For more information: Leslie Staroneck, Mass. Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups - (617) 248-0922
Pamela Whitney, DSS Domestic Violence Unit - (617) 727-0900

BACKGROUND

In 1991 a state of emergency was declared for victims of domestic abuse in response to the rising number of homicides. The high rate of domestic violence continues with nearly 42,000 victims seeking 209A protective orders in the District Courts and Probate/Family Courts of the Commonwealth in 1996.

Research shows that the most dangerous time for a victim of abuse is immediately after receiving a protective order or when attempting to leave the relationship. Data show that 75% of abusers against whom protective orders are issued have a prior history of crime; 50% have a prior record of VIOLENT crime. Victims seeking protection are in legitimate fear of further abuse. It is vital that victims to whom protective orders are issued receive immediate help developing a personalized safety plan. Victims also often need assistance with court forms, information about the legal process and referrals to community support services.

The lack of specialized domestic violence advocates for civil 209A petitioners at many courts causes a serious gap in services to a large and vulnerable population. Victims at court, many of them in crisis, need assistance to understand the court system, the protective order petitioning process and their legal, safety and resource options.

SAFEPLAN Massachusetts

SAFEPLAN* Massachusetts places specialized domestic violence advocates in courts to assist victims seeking civil 209A protective orders. A SAFEPLAN pilot contracted to Necessities/Necesidades, the battered women's program in Hampshire County, has been funded for \$115,000 in FY's 1996 and 1997.

Statistics from the pilot project show a 61% increase over the state average in victims returning to court to extend their initial protective orders. This high return rate means longer lasting protection for individual victims, stronger sanctions against batterers and more effective assistance from the courts. The data reveal that 82% of all victims coming to court seeking protective orders have had no prior contact with a battered women's service organization. SAFEPLAN Advocates provide referrals to those agencies and others in addition to helping victims "safety plan" before leaving court. These services are ABSOLUTELY VITAL safety precautions for victims of domestic violence. SAFEPLAN has served over 800 victims in the Hampshire County area since its inception. The thousands of other victims receiving protective orders and outside Hampshire County deserve comparable services.

PROPOSAL

House 1 for FY 1998 recommends continuation of the pilot site and statewide expansion to all Probate and Family Courts. Regional Supervisors based in community programs and a Project Manager at the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) will provide advocate supervision and project oversight. House 1 recommended \$814,550 for SAFEPLAN.

MOVA requests \$876,182 to fully fund statewide coverage of advocates in the Probate and Family Courts, the existing pilot site and oversight from MOVA. Like the existing pilot, new sites will include:

- Specialized domestic violence advocates stationed in courts to assist victims seeking protective orders. MOVA will contract with community based programs to fill and supervise these positions.
- Regional Coordinators will train and supervised court-based advocates; ensure cooperation and communication with district attorneys' offices, legal service providers, law schools and others; and assist in the recruitment of volunteers to augment the SAFEPLAN advocates.
- Statewide oversight and contract administration by the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance.

* Safety Assistance For Every Person Leaving Abuse Now

The second part of the document details the various methods used to collect and analyze financial data. It describes the process of gathering data from different sources, such as sales invoices, purchase orders, and bank statements. It also discusses the use of statistical tools and software to analyze this data, identifying trends and patterns that can inform business decisions.

The final part of the document provides a summary of the key findings and conclusions. It highlights the importance of continuous monitoring and reporting of financial performance. It also offers recommendations for improving the efficiency of the financial reporting process and for ensuring that the data is used effectively to support the organization's strategic goals.

FY'98 FACT SHEET
Department of Social Services, Domestic Violence Unit

	FY'97 Appropriation	FY'98 Request
DSS Domestic Violence Unit	\$463,500	\$586,500

Governor Weld has requested \$586,500 in his House One Budget for the DSS Domestic Violence Unit. Funding would convert staff from consultant status to state positions and expand the Unit.

The DSS Domestic Violence Unit was implemented statewide with legislative support in 1994. The Unit was designed to respond to the alarming number of cases where children are abused or neglected in homes where their mother is abused as well. **Massachusetts statistics are consistent with national research indicating a 50%-80% overlap of child abuse and woman abuse within the same households.**

The primary goal of the DSS Domestic Violence Unit is to protect children by also protecting their mothers. In addition, the Unit seeks to prevent foster care placements by assisting children and their mothers with safety and supports to provide a stable environment.

The Unit's **Domestic Violence Specialists** provide training and case consultation to social workers and managers, and direct service to DSS involved battered women. They also act as liaisons between the 26 DSS area offices and battered women's programs, courts, law enforcement, et cetera, to promote an integrated community response to both child abuse and domestic violence. The two **Coordinators** supervise the Specialists. Each Coordinator covers 3 DSS Regions. The **Program Development Specialist** monitors DSS funded battered women's service providers to ensure compliance with program standards and that battered women and their children are receiving the highest quality of services.

The Domestic Violence Unit has produced dramatic results. The fact that Domestic Violence Specialists have been called to consult on 4,000 cases in the last fiscal year indicates that Specialists, protocols and mandatory pre-service training have succeeded in raising awareness about domestic violence among DSS workers. Each Specialist covers 2-3 area offices and although they are all stretched by this schedule, it has become increasingly clear that adequately covering some of our larger urban offices requires additional staffing.

These positions are challenging and difficult, bridging the gap between the child welfare system and the battered women's movement; working to unite these areas to protect both women and children and to make homes safer for all family members. Given the knowledge base, skills, and qualifications required for these positions, there is a need to be able to offer job security and benefits (sick time, medical insurance, vacation) in order to retain these highly qualified individuals. The ability to offer basic benefits will lead to a more secure and stable workforce.

For more information: Pamela Whitney
DSS/Domestic Violence Unit
(617) 727-0900

BATTERED WOMEN'S LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC)

Line Item 0321-1600*

	FY '97	FY '98 H1	FY '98 Request
BWLAP:	\$632,000	\$982,805	\$982,805
Basic Family Law:	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation asks the Legislature to appropriate **\$982,805** to expand the Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project (BWLAP) statewide in FY '98 and **\$500,000** to maintain basic family law legal assistance for victims of **battering**. These amounts are included in H1.

BWLAP provides comprehensive long-term post 209A legal assistance to victims of domestic violence in complex cases of child custody and visitation, paternity, and child support and enforcement. Victims and their children are also assisted in securing housing, health coverage, and long-term economic independence from abusers. BWLAP services supplement basic family law services, funded separately, which are available to domestic violence victims in less complex cases.

BWLAP was established FY '94 in four pilot communities. With the support of the legislature, it was expanded in FY '96 and FY '97 and is now available in ten programs covering two-thirds of the state. **In FY '98 the Commonwealth has the opportunity to expand BWLAP statewide, making essential legal services available to battered women and their children in communities throughout the state.**

BWLAP depends on the availability of basic family law services at legal services offices across the state as a foundation for its more comprehensive services. In FY '97 federal cuts to legal services threatened to undermine BWLAP's foundation of basic family law services. Fortunately, the state stepped in and established \$500,000 funding for basic family law, replacing most of what was lost on the federal side, and basic family law services were essentially maintained.

To maintain basic family law and expand BWLAP in FY '98, we request:

- \$500,000 to provide basic family law services to battered women; and
- \$982,805 to expand BWLAP's more comprehensive legal assistance statewide.

The Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project enables women to pursue long-term family safety and security after they have obtained short-term emergency 209A orders. With increased support in FY '98, BWLAP will provide comprehensive legal assistance in 470 additional cases benefitting 1740 domestic violence victims and children.

*The total MLAC line item 0321-1600 FY '98 request is \$3,637,887 for three areas: SSI Benefits including Disability Benefits Project at \$1,135,496 and Transitional SSI Assistance at \$500,000; Battered Women including Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project at \$982,805 and Basic Family Law at \$500,000; and Medicare Advocacy Project at \$519,586.

For more information: Jacquelynne Bowman
MLRI
(617) 357-0700

Karen Green
MLAC
(617) 367-8544

Elaine O'Reilly
Governmental Strategies
(617) 523-7808

FY '98 FACT SHEET

CERTIFIED BATTERER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Line Item 4513-1001

	FY '97 Appropriation	FY '98 Request
CBIP	0	\$450,000

The Coalition of Certified Batterer Intervention Programs asks the Governor to appropriate \$450,000 to the Department of Public Health for certified batterer intervention programs to assist indigent batterers and their families; provided that the Department of Public Health, on behalf of the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence, conduct a program evaluation to identify the capacity of said programs to comply with certification standards and effectively meet the safety needs of the victims and children of batterers; and that the Department shall submit a report of the results of said evaluation to the Commission no later than November 1, 1997.

The 33 state-certified batterer intervention programs collectively provide services to 4,000 batterers. Services are provided in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese and Khmer. The minimum duration of treatment is 40 weeks. Batterer treatment reduces recidivism by making batterers less likely to commit new acts of violence or to violate restraining orders. Each violent act prevented saves the state substantial money in prosecution, court and incarceration costs.

Batterer programs also educate batterers about non-abusive parenting. Batterer programs also refer victims to battered women's programs and otherwise assist victims by documenting the batterer's level of dangerousness and assessing and documenting child abuse.

The requested funding provides additional direct service staffing (1/3 full time equivalent) to:

* expand capacity to serve indigent clients. Currently, many convicted offenders are receiving probation only, with no referrals for treatment, because batterer intervention programs lack the capacity to serve all indigents.

* commit additional time to monitoring batterers by speaking to victims, probation officers and others. This increased monitoring decreases the odds that the batterer will re-offend.

For more information:	Helene Tomlinson Women's Health, DPH (617) 624-5459	David Adams Emerge (617) 547-9879	Mitchell Rothenberg Common Purpose (617) 628-2451
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FY '98 FACT SHEET
Statewide Visitation Center Services

	FY '97 Appropriation	FY '98 Request
Visitation Center Services	\$50,000	\$450,000

Governor Weld has requested \$450,000 in his House One Budget for statewide Visitation Center Services. This funding would increase the availability of Visitation Center Services by supporting six Centers, one for each region in the state.

Often in domestic violence situations when the women leaves, the violence escalates. **The offender frequently uses visitation of the children as an opportunity to continue his abuse of their mother. There are also serious concerns that he may be physically and/or emotionally abusive to the children during the visits.** He may use these visits to question the children inappropriately about their mother in order to gain information that might aid him in targeting her for further abuse.

Visitation centers can help address these concerns. They provide a neutral, safe location for dropping off children so that the parents do not interact. **If there are concerns for the children's safety, the offender can be mandated to visit with his children on-site, and a trained staff member supervises these visits.** Staff who monitor the visits can evaluate and report on the progress of the offender in dealing with his children over time. **Information obtained through visitation center services is extremely helpful to DSS and the courts in making long-term custody and visitation decisions that are truly in the best interest of the children.** Visitation centers can also provide parent and child education and support groups to offending and non-offending parents to help them develop skills they need to nurture their children. In addition, visitation centers serve parents and children where there are mental health and substance abuse issues which interfere with parenting abilities. **All of these visitation center services are crucial in keeping a mother safe after she has separated from the offender and ensuring that children are protected.**

DSS has been using federal money to pilot three existing visitation centers. These centers are well utilized by DSS, the courts, police, victim service providers, etc. who are united in support of these invaluable services for children and families. Unfortunately, these programs cannot meet the current statewide demand. State funding would increase safe havens for children by increasing the number of visitation centers to a total of six and providing adequate funding for centers that are overutilized and underfunded.

For more information: Pamela Whitney
DSS/Domestic Violence Unit
(617) 727-0900

